



ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL
COOPERATION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

14-15 OCTOBER 2009

SEE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Priority 1 Workshop

Title: Paving the Way for Innovation in the SEE Area: The Public Aspect

Overall, the First Call for Proposals generated an enormous interest in the Priority 1 Areas of Intervention (AoI) 1.1 and 1.2. However, following post call analysis, it became readily apparent that the interest shown in Priority 1 Area of Intervention 1.3, and more especially the Public Aspect of this AoI did not generate the level of applications or focus that could have been reasonably expected. Following discussions with the Monitoring Committee of the Programme, it was determined that a 2nd call which, in terms of Priority 1, was directly focused on AoI 1.3 could potentially resolve this anomaly and thereby provide a better balance in terms of the overall Priority 1 project portfolio.

As part of its preparation for the Second Call for Proposals this Priority 1 Workshop, as part of the Annual Event, was organized to develop the understanding of and to promote the SEE Programme's Priority 1 Area of Intervention 1.3, "Enhance the Framework Conditions and Pave the Way for Innovation Framework". In particular, the Programme wished to promote the "Public Aspect", by encouraging activities that support the image formation of South East Europe as a place of innovation and growth, encourage young people to develop entrepreneurial spirit, mobilise existing institutions in contacting and communicating with the population, wake enthusiasm for scientific education, tackle information lacks in the area of technology and innovation, diminish fears concerning new technologies. In considering project approaches the programme also wished to encourage applicants to consider gender issues in order to increase the participation of women in technology and innovation.

Objectives of the workshop

- Participants understanding of the need for public awareness and engagement with innovation reinforced
- Participants understand the SEE 1.3 AoI approach
- Participants are stimulated and motivated through a case study approach
- Participants have the opportunity express opinion, receive opinion and network

Target groups

The workshop was intended for the following stakeholders (not exclusively):

- National, regional and local authorities;
- National, regional and local development agencies;
- Universities, education institutes & research centres, entrepreneurial/innovation support bodies; industry and SMEs;
- Non governmental organisations;
- International organisations and bodies.

The Agenda
9:00 – 9:05 – Welcome and Introduction --Stephen Halligan, SEE JTS Project Manager --
9:05 – 9:35 – Towards an Innovation Society --Professor Radmil Polenakovik, Ss.Cyril and Methodius University Business Start -up Centre--
9:35 – 10.00– The SEE Programme: Aol 1.3 unpacked --Stephen Halligan, SEE JTS Project Manager --
10:00- 10:30 – Case Study (The Innovation Circus) --Dr Valdis Egle, The Latvian Technological Center --
10:30- 10:40 – Participants Q & A
10:40-11:00 - Coffee Break
11:00-11:45 - The See Context: Internal Conditions (moderated discussion) --Andreas Resch (moderator); Professor Radmill Polenakovik; Dr Valdis Egle; Elke Dall, Western Balkan Countries INCO-NET--
11:45-12:00 Participants Q & A
12.00-12:10 The 2nd call/closing re marks --Stephen Halligan, SEE JTS Project Manager --

The Workshop (all presentations can be downloaded from the SEE Website)

The opening presentation by Professor Radmil Polenakovik, “Towards an Innovation Society”, aimed to set the scene, provide a context and stimulate thought around the topic at hand.

Professor Polenakovik explored what we mean by society, innovation and more especially an ‘Innovation Society’. The presentation considered the concept of and elements of innovation more widely and moved towards considering innovation at a governance/policy level and the state of play in terms of regional innovation strategies and systems. Key points included that innovation is high on the policy agenda but still a narrow approach generally prevails; systematic approaches are being introduced

gradually but often with misunderstandings; Regional Innovation Strategies showing success but often discontinued.

The second half of the presentation looked at the question of how to build an innovation society? Looking at the need for widespread involvement, a culture of innovating and the supporting framework. Professor Polenakovic closed his presentation with a concrete example of the UKIM -BSC experience in working with students.

The first JTS presentation of the workshop sought to unpack Aol 1.3 offering an understanding of the two aspects of Aol 1.3, namely the Governance Aspect and secondly the Public Aspect. As a result of the extremely low level of interest in evidence for the Public Aspect in the first call, this understanding was explored with more emphasis. This emphasis included encouraging ideas which develop the understanding of and engagement of the majority of citizens in innovation and entrepreneurship; developing a general social and entrepreneurial climate that is open minded to new developments; creating an attractive environment for innovation actors; developing a positive image of the SEE as an area of and for innovation and entrepreneurship.

In order to stimulate ideas and demonstrate an Aol 1.3 Public Aspect project in action the workshop moved towards the Innovation Circus case study (CIRCUS – Challenge and Illuminate Regional Creators and Unfold Societal Strength). Dr Egle from The Latvian Technological Centre, one of the original project partners, presented the project. The Innovation Circus proved an excellent vehicle to highlight a range of relevant activities within a European transnational project.

The moderated discussion panel which followed entitled “The SEE Context: Internal Conditions” offered the opportunity for the specialist contributors to put forward their thoughts on particular points and issues which came to the fore from the previous presentations. The discussion then widened out to delegate participation.

Conclusions and Observations arising from the workshop

-Despite the lack of ideas in the first call, particularly around the Public Aspect of Aol 1.3, there exists considerable interest in developing public awareness and engagement with innovation and entrepreneurship. One immediate indicator of this was the collaboration discussion during the break between participants and feedback during the discussion forum

-Attitudes are positively changing with politicians and the public sector more widely towards the promotion of innovation. There is scope to work with and develop this interest but we need to really develop ideas to sell to politicians. Beware of ‘paper

acceptance'. Plenty of strategies on paper but the real challenge is how to move these to reality

-Achieving financial commitment (match or for sustainability) remains complicated

-At the same time as improving attitude, constraints remain, and these vary in different countries/regions of the SEE Area. Some lack of capacity remains to develop these types of project (sometimes seen as very bureaucratic and time consuming)

-The importance of a holistic approach with projects tackling public awareness and engagement. The public are a 'broad church' with many stakeholder required for projects to really develop their ideas and generate impact

-Essential to work with changing governance bodies and individuals. Example offered where the average career lifespan of politicians in politics was 6 years

-More traditionally research and development funding bodies, programmes and projects are increasingly moving towards a more 'knowledge triangle' approach. Engaging increasingly with policy makers, educators and entrepreneurs. This provides a greater opportunity to collaborate. More connections are needed

-The capacity issue needs to be understood and worked with more fully. It can sometimes be identified in terms of specific issues e.g. procurement procedures, practices and delays. Point was made that project providers should be careful who they partner/work with in this respect.

-The importance of sharing ideas was emphasized. Need to make the most of what is available for this but there remain gaps in facilitating media in this respect. Noted that the SEE Programme does have a dedicated section of its website for project ideas

-Innovation initiatives are still often donor community led

-Sustainability of projects remains an issue